

Brockett, Charles D. *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

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tem overall? Rousseau argues that the evolution of conflict has an important impact on the strength of domestic opposition and, therefore, the constraining power of institutions and needs to be further researched. (p. 341)

The case studies highlight some interesting points not easily discernable within the statistical analyses. Notable among these is the formation of unity cabinets by democratic polities in times of war. These “war” cabinets are much more likely to use force because the joint decision-making process makes any foreign policy failure much less likely to be exploited by the opposition which “minimizes one of the perceived risks of initiating violence.” (p. 341) Second, the case studies highlighted “a ‘surprising’ number of democratic initiations against revolutionary regimes.” This suggests that the focus of previous studies of revolutionary regimes’ propensities to engage in conflict may be misplaced if these states are often actually the targets rather than the instigators of aggression.

There is much to praise in Rousseau’s work: the clarity of argument, the useful literature review, and the use of the ICB dataset, which provides more nuanced measures of conflict initiation and escalation. My concerns with the tests employed revolve around measures excluded. The first involves previous conflict; one would expect states that have a history of conflict to be more likely to engage in subsequent conflictual behavior. The second is the importance of trade and, to a lesser extent, foreign aid. There is a great deal of research on the effect that trade may have on conflict, but this measure has also been excluded from the analyses. Indeed the importance of previous conflict, trade ties, and foreign aid were all highlighted in the case studies Rousseau used but not in his statistical analyses. The economic constraints facing leaders would seem to be particularly important when deciding to escalate a spat into something more serious or not, precisely the kinds of arguments that Rousseau is interested in.

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Brockett, Charles D. *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

As Charles Brockett correctly points out several times in his book, *Political Movements and Violence in Central America*, this is the most detailed and complete study of the political contention and repression cycles that developed in Guatemala from 1960 to 1984 and in El Salvador from 1960 to 1991. Brockett’s profound knowledge of the region provides the reader with a careful description of the historic grievances in the region, the configuration of political opportunities and the lack thereof, as well as the processes of consciousness rais-

ing that motivated activists and protesters to sustain their struggle, despite the life risks posed by massive and indiscriminate repression exercised by both states.

His argument goes as follows: while existing grievances laid the foundations for contentious movements to emerge, it was changing political conditions that accentuated and/or created new grievances by opening or closing opportunities for their expression. On the one hand, Brockett argues that the process of 'critical' consciousness raising not only allowed activists and protesters to identify the causes of their oppression and evaluate the risks and opportunities of joining contentious movements but it also empowered protesters to participate in highly risky activities. On the other, the repressive response of the state to the contentious expression of these grievances is the crucial variable necessary to understand the political violence experienced in Guatemala and El Salvador. In between are opening and closing political opportunities that trigger and contract protest activity in complex ways. The closing of political access decreases opportunities but creates and intensifies existing grievances. When opportunities reopen, the aggrieved and previously mobilized groups are even more prompt to take advantage of these newly created opportunities to push their struggle forward once again. This becomes particularly evident when political elites become fragmented and the fractures between the state and domestic elites open spaces for marginalized groups. In the case of Guatemala and El Salvador, cross-national elite relations proved to be crucial, as fluctuations of these governments' relations with Washington, DC, determined the capacity and propensity of the states to repress their respective contentious movements.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section comprises four chapters in which the author lays out how grievances gave birth to contentious movements in Guatemala and El Salvador. In the second section, with nine complex hypotheses, Brockett analyzes the relationships between political opportunities, contention, and repression, and briefly compares these to contextual descriptions of the prevailing situations in the other three Central American countries — Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica — to explain why political violence developed in some cases and not in others.

To sustain his arguments, Brockett conducted the most up-to-date collection of available accounts on contentious political activities and numbers of repression victims in both countries. These two sources enable the author to describe the relationship between protests and state repression with thorough correlations, while archival information was used to provide the context for these cycles of contention movements and political violence. Although the author humbly recognizes the reasons for why he does not use sophisticated statistical means to test these relationships, the absence of these tests is disappointing for a field of study that has developed precisely on rigorous statistical testing models. Nevertheless, the field research conducted by Brockett remains impressive and strongly validates his claims. The only other criticism to his work derives from

the fact that he does not provide the same systematic evidence to sustain his consciousness-raising argument, which is presented as a crucial element to understanding the individual processes that give challengers the willingness “to carry on their struggle, not only against heavily unfavorable odds of success, but also in the face of great risks to themselves.” Interviews with survivors would have strengthened his claims. Nevertheless, as the author mentions, state repression continues to be applied against political challengers, especially in Guatemala, compromising the possibility to conduct such an endeavor.

Probably the most valuable contribution of Brockett’s study — aside from the exhaustive relation of peasant and labor contentious activity in Central America — is the application and corresponding refinement of political opportunity theory to social movements in the developing world. The political process approach was first designed to explain social movements in well-established Western democracies. Other studies of social movements in developing and semi-authoritarian countries have been conducted in the past. However, Brockett’s study represents the most comprehensive analysis of how “the configuration of political opportunities are crucial for the emergence, trajectory, and certainly outcomes of contentious movements” in Guatemala and El Salvador during their respective experiences with authoritarianism.

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Entman, Robert M. *Projections of Power: Framing News, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Issue framing is one of the most valuable tools in the arsenal of someone attempting to push the public one way or the other in regard to foreign policy. In essence, framing is an attempt to define the alternatives and dimensions of an issue to make it more likely that the public will agree with the proposal a certain policy elite favors. For instance, a proponent of the war in Iraq might argue that we have to choose whether we are going to continue to fight in Iraq, or if we’re going to surrender to the terrorists. When the choice is defined in such a way, the outcome is always going to favor the pro-war position. As such, a successful frame turns the debate into a game of three-card Monte, where the dealer wins not when you pick a card, but when you buy into the premise that one of the cards is a winner.

Framing has been important to political science and social psychology alternatives to the “minimal impact” theory of the media for at least the past 20